remitting the growers' share of 1/3rd interest on Special Coffee Term Loan (SCTL) during the moratoruim period from 30.6.2005 to 31.3.2006.

(c) There is no proposal to extend any additional benefits.

Steps to contain falling tobacco prices

745. SHR NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that due to falling tobacco prices, the tobacco growers of Andhra Pradesh and various other States are facing problems in various other States are facing problems in purchasing seeds and fertilizers and are not in a position to continue tobacco cultivation which is leading to huge loss of foreign exchange to our nation;

(b) if so, whether Government would assure of making procurement of entire tobacco production mandatory through Tobacco Board, which may fix remunerated prices of tobacco every year;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) The quantity of tobacco marketed and the average price realised is increasing year by year. The foreign exchange earnings are also increasing. The Tobacco Board facilitates supplies of major inputs like seeds and fertilisers to registered growers.

(b) to (d) The average price realisation by growers is well above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the Government. Hence, the need for market intervention/procurement by Tobacco Board is not deemed necesary.

AEZ for Tobacco in A.P.

746. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tobacco exports from the country have crossed an all time high during this year touching 163 tonnes valued at about Rs. 1,362 crore;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that inspite of this, the Ministry of Commerce has not formed and exclusive Agri-Export-Zone (AEZ) for tobacco in Andhra Pradesh, which is the tobacco capital of the country; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The exports of tobacco and tobacco products during 2004-05 has been an all time high at Rs. 1362.18 crores.

(b) and (c) In view of steady growth of tobacco production and export every year, the need for forming an exclusive Agri-Export-Zone for tobacco has not been felt necessary.

Steps to develop tobacco exports

747. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to set up an Inter-Ministerial Task Force to coordinate and help develop tobacco exports;

(b) whether it is a fact that foreign imports are damaging Indian farmers;

(c) whether Government has initiated any steps to ensure that Indian farmers are not damaged by foreign imports;

(d) what are the reasons for Government dealing with the problem in a very slow manner; and

(e) the steps proposed to ensure that Indian tobacco is not exposed to unfair competition from foreign products in this area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The increased domestic production of FCV tobacco year after year and its marketing at prices well above the Minimum Suport Price (MSP) fixed by the Government suggests that foreign imports have not caused any damage to Indian tobacco farmers.

(c) to (e) The Tobacco Board is implementing several extension and developmental progammes such as model project areas, integrated pest management etc. to enhance the quality and production of tobacco to meet the changing international demands. These measures are directed at improving yields, quality, and remunerative prices for farmers. The concerns of international customers are adressed in a focussed manner to train and educate growers to meet global standards.